



## Book to Action 2021 Case Study

**Library: Palo Alto City Library**

### **Book to Action 2021 Summary & Impact Reflection**

*Please summarize your Book to Action 2021 public programming series. Write for an audience that has never heard of your library, your community, or the Book to Action concept. Start by introducing your library and community. Be sure to show how the Book to Action topic and titles met a specific community need or aspiration. Be sure to highlight your community partners, explain significant, innovative, or new models for public programs, and show how this program impacted your community. Limit 2-3 paragraphs.*

Palo Alto is, to the outside, an affluent and diverse community that looks idyllic. For those of us who live inside of it, it's a little bit different. There is affluence and diversity. There is also invisible poverty and passive racism as well as a history of racist policies including red-lining. Over the last 5 years, Palo Alto City Library has worked to broaden the type of programming done and to focus specifically on programming that highlights diversity and encourages education and thought around social justice issues. In 2020, after a summer of nationwide protests, the City joined this initiative and created a Race and Equity Team to help address these issues across the City and within City Departments. The moment seemed right for our Book to Action programming to focus on racial equity and antiracism education and we selected Ibram X. Kendi's *How to Be An Antiracist* as our book selection (along with two supplementary titles, *This Book is Anti-racist* by Tiffany Jewell and *Antiracist Baby* by Ibram X. Kendi) and focused our programming series on continuing the conversations already taking place in Palo Alto and to move toward the goal of creating a more just and antiracist community.

For our Book to Action series this year, we partnered with a number of organizations to help provide and promote events. We partnered with social justice organizations like Showing Up for Racial Justice to provide introductory workshops to concepts like antiracism and also partnered with local faith organizations who are also working on social and racial justice issues. Working with faith organizations in particular was new for us and are partnerships I think libraries overlook as opportunities. Partnering with local faith organizations provides opportunities to reach new audiences within the community and we found that it helped bring together various "silos" within our city. In our case, the faith leader we worked with helped us immensely with our speaker event, helping us secure a local best-selling author. The two of them engaged in a conversation that not only was hyper-local to their experiences here in the community and opportunities for change but also was appealing to communities at large who are grappling with questions of racial equity. Additionally, this year we worked with our youth services librarians to bring aspects of these programs to teen events and even storytimes proving that it is never too early to begin the lifetime work of antiracist thought and action.

In our community, the Book to Action series clearly helped to stimulate thought and action and helped move forward a goal of having 100 Community Conversations on race. Working with other city groups and departments meant that our reach was wide and that was reflected in our participation numbers. We have heard from attendees who have asked for ways to take their new knowledge and transform it into action and are looking for ways to get involved, demonstrating that this program series really resonated within our community.

## **Community Member Quotes**

*Please enter 1-2 community member quotes from surveys or public comments that may be anonymized and used in future grant applications and program model sharing.*

"This was a great event. Very informative; impactful opening to hear the presenters' stories and experiences (the examples of being at the check register and being treated different, the hostility at a neighbor's door, etc.); the slide about the "zones" was helpful and the discussion about how to get into the growth zone and things that we can all be doing to be a part of an antiracist community. Thanks to the sponsors and speakers for this very meaningful event."

"Wonderful important new next steps to take in the framework of any individual or organization that wants to self-examine and grow!"

## **Impact on Professional Development**

*Please summarize how participating in the Book to Action 2021 initiative impacted you and your team's professional development. As a result of participating in this program, what skills did you or your team learn? What professional takeaways would you share with others looking to improve community engagement with adults & intergenerational groups?*

This year's Book to Action team worked closely together taking on various roles to make our program series successful. We found that the team gelled really nicely and had an easy time working together, which was really helpful when we ran into inevitable difficulties. The team learned how to work with other city departments which sometimes meant hearing and responding to perspectives different from ours and our goals for this program series. We also learned how to respond to criticisms of our programs from people who took issue with some of the content of the programs or partner organizations with whom we worked.

Community engagement sometimes means engaging with people who are unhappy. No matter the type of response you get from the community, one of the big things our team learned was the importance of listening for understanding and responding thoughtfully even when fundamental disagreements exist.

## **Final Words of Advice**

*What brief bit of advice (1-2 sentences) would you give to library staff members interested in coordinating a Book to Action or similar community engagement series for adults and intergenerational groups in their community?*

One critical piece for successful Book to Action programming is having the support of your upper management. This makes a big difference not only in helping to allocate additional resources but also to serve as support for the work if questions or criticism arise.

Total # Programs: 16

Total Attendance at Programs: 1,215

Book to Action URL(s): Book to Action Images: [library.cityofpaloalto.org/bta](http://library.cityofpaloalto.org/bta)

Please attach 1-2 images (.jpg or .png files only) that best represent your Book to Action 2021 series

Sample File Name: *BTA 2021 San Leandro Library Image 1.jpg*

Image 1 File Name: BTA 2021 Palo Alto City Library Image 1.png

Image 1 Caption: Book to Action 2021 Speaker Event Promo Image

Image 2 File Name: BTA 2021 Palo Alto City Library Image 2.png

Image 2 Caption: Book to Action 2021 Book Selection Promo Image

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May others contact you with questions?     Yes     No



Image 1 Book to Action 2021 Speaker Event Promo Image

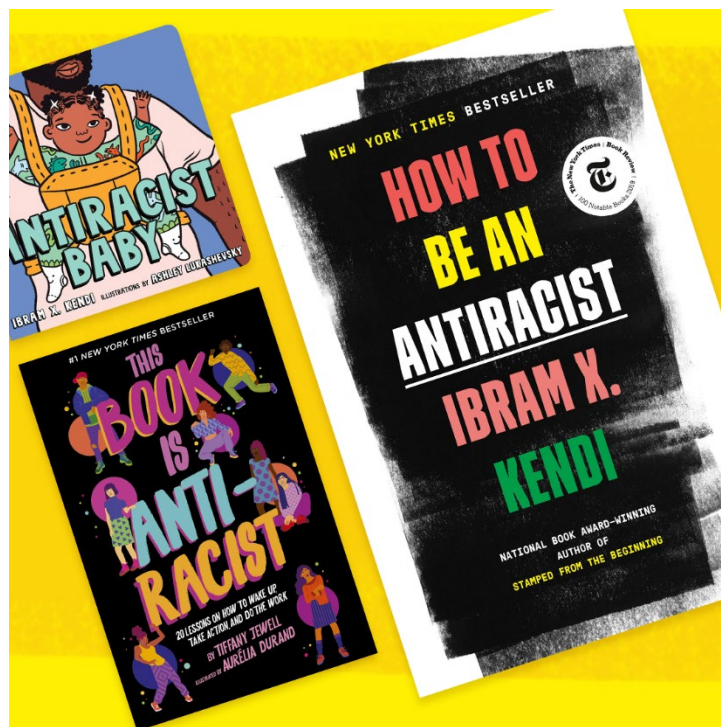


Image 2 Book to Action 2021 Book Selection Promo Image

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